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Research article

Towards a dialogical anthropology: For David Graeber

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Abstract

This article argues that a holistic reading of David Graeber's *oeuvre* reveals a coherent and systematic intellectual and political project. We argue that his theories, public interventions, analyses, or ideas scattered across different (sub)disciplines, formats, and topics as diverse as non-state spaces, anarchist anthropology, democracy, mutual aid, debt, bureaucracy, bullshit jobs, kings and a different understanding of history and the development of science, should be understood as a well-considered and systematic attempt to reimagine and reposition the role of scholarship in a search for a radically different political and economic model. We focus on dialogue as the centre of both Graeber's scholarship and politics. For Graeber, dialogue has always been the primary anthropological method, not only in terms of fieldwork but also in the context of the collective or dialogic emergence of ideas. At the same time, dialogue is the very core of his politics as a collective attempt to reconcile unconsummatable perspectives in a practical situation of action. Finally, we explore Graeber's idea of care and freedom as a new political and economic paradigm. We consider Graeber's simple and yet infinitely complex question: why not use the ideas of care and freedom, instead of production and consumption, as a basis for political economy, which should, after all, only be a way to take care of each other?

KEYWORDS: David Graeber, anthropology, anarchism, dialogue, care, freedom

Introduction

Commenting on the role of anthropology, James C. Scott wrote that anthropology should be viewed as a 'natural partner of other social sciences'; it complements them powerfully by adding the 'phenomenology of lived experience by explaining how people understand and describe why they do what they do' (2013, p. 66). The social sciences cannot afford to ignore dialogical encounters between explanations of outside observers and those whose actions are being observed. Doing research otherwise would, according to Scott, mean 'social science behind the back of actors' (2013, p. 66). For a special issue of *Anthropological Notebooks* dedicated to the memory of David Rolfe Graeber (1961–2020), we have attempted to follow this recognition and gather inspiring and, most importantly, diverse reflections on Graeber's scholarship from anthropology and related fields—philosophy, political science, sociology, social work, and history.

We assume that most readers of *Anthropological Notebooks* are already well familiar with Graeber's works grappling with diverse topics and in various academic (sub)fields. This article, however, intends to offer a holistic reading of his *oeuvre*. Over the years, Graeber's pathbreaking theories gradually revealed his much larger intellectual and political project that was as much the consequence of his unparalleled intellectual and analytical skills as it was the result of his political activism and immersion in diverse social and political struggles across the world. Even a cursory glance at his opus reveals a coherent and systematic analysis of something that we could bluntly call "possibilities". In this article, we focus on dialogue as the very centre of both Graeber's scholarship and politics. For Graeber, dialogue has always been the primary anthropological method, not only in terms of fieldwork but also in the context of the collective or dialogic emergence of ideas. At the same time, dialogue is the very core of his politics as a collective attempt to reconcile unconsummatable perspectives in a practical situation of action. Dialogic politics makes it possible to start from a common commitment to action and not from a shared definition of reality, as is the case with Marxist political ontology. Finally, we explore Graeber's idea of care and freedom as a new political and economic paradigm. We consider his simple and yet infinitely complex question: why not use the ideas of care and freedom, instead of production and consumption, as a basis for the political economy, which should, after all, only be a way to take care of each other?

With this article, we intend to show that his diverse interventions share a common thread. That his eclecticism should, as such, be understood as a well-considered and systematic attempt to reimagine and reposition the role of scholarship in a search for radically different political, cultural, and economic models that embrace the practices of

generosity, mutual aid, and reciprocity. His "scholarship as gift" should help us reinvent political and economic models based on the idea of care and freedom, so desperately needed to transform how we live, work, consume, and produce in response to the magnitude and scope of global (environmental) challenges. Or, as Graeber suggests in *Fragments of an anarchist anthropology* (2004, p. 12):

> One obvious role for a radical intellectual is to do precisely that: to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be the larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities—as gifts.

Although Graeber's opus can be explored from different perspectives and in various contexts, this project's overall goal is to re-examine and re-connect seemingly separate and unrelated debates on non-state spaces, anarchist anthropology, democracy, mutual aid, debt, bureaucracy, "bullshit" jobs, kings and, last but not least, a different understanding of history and the development of science, to detect the problems of a hegemonic paradigm (and academic alienation) and at the same time reveal a radically different vision of politics and scholarship. They stipulate a post-, even counter-disciplinary reading and application in our academic work, whilst in the political terrain, they call for the most humane act—especially if we consider the original meaning of the Latin word *humando*—to bury our old theories, methodologies, and vocabularies, to give way for new inventions and discoveries. If we paraphrase Graeber (2011a, p. 10), this is '*our* attempt—however modest, however hesitant—to start such a conversation, and most of all, to suggest that the task might not be nearly so daunting as we'd be given to imagine.'

It requires not only a considerable amount of imagination but also courage to be able to recognise all the challenges we are facing and, even more so, possibilities for overcoming them. David Graeber was one of the few authors capable of such synthesis, bridging imagination and courage. His untimely death is, therefore, not tragic only from a purely personal perspective but is as tragic and such a great loss for academia and, above all, for social movements across the globe. Unfortunately, this kind of intellectual and political work has been our existential necessity for quite some time. Today, the COVID-19 pandemic and renewed threat of nuclear war are not the only crises we confront, even if the most evident at this point. They must be understood as part of broader and far-reaching global challenges, which radically redefine the individual, society, our relationships, ways of organising, and the very foundations of the political process as we

know it. All of this requires us to rethink a new relationship between life and work, the individual and the community—to rethink possibilities, then.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2015, p. 44) argues that we live in a transitional time in which 'we face modern problems for which there are no modern solutions'. We face challenges that require solutions beyond existing institutions and political forms, so new principles of political and social organisation need to be invented. However, our path "there" leads precisely via the contest of ideas in the "here and now". Graeber (2004, 2007a, 2011a, 2013, 2020) repeatedly pointed out that a political shift—sacrificing old political identities and strategies, and especially ideals (as productivity and growth)—is needed to achieve a society of care and freedom. True, in the current debates about the state and perspectives of democracy we need "new thinking" (cf. Keane, 2009, 2015). The old criteria, such as sovereign state, party pluralism, market economy, etc., are somewhat outdated categories in the light of global challenges. They no longer have any connection to the current dynamics of political events and also offer no answers to the questions we are asking. At best, as Graeber (2019) remarked, they are concerned with solving problems that no longer exist. It is therefore not surprising that ideas of a new beginning, transformation, or transition are emerging in political discourse. Throughout history, all attempts to consolidate economic and political projects have ended badly, followed by the arduous search for a new frame of reference. In this context, we can understand the biblical Jubilee and the Sabbatical year, when debts were written off, slaves freed and land returned to its original owners. Similarly, in ancient Greek philosophy, *kairos* (καιρός) marked the "moment of transition" or the "right time" not only to replace the gods but also the fundamental assumptions of the political and social order. Indeed, today's times are increasingly reminiscent of this kind of time of urgent transformation.

Dialogue

For David Graeber, the practice of dialogue is at the very centre of both anthropology and anarchism. Conversation, he has argued, has always been the primary anthropological method, not only in terms of fieldwork but also in the context of the collective or dialogic emergence of ideas. Real thought is always dialogic, and all thought has a dialogic basis. This argument is undoubtedly unusual and deserving of close attention. These ideas make an appearance quite early in his work. For example, in his *Toward an anthropological theory of value* (2001), he speaks of Vigotsky and his attention to the internalisation of verbal interaction with others and of Bakthin, who famously remarked that con-

sciousness is the voices of others speaking in your head. For both thinkers, dialogue, not individual consciousness, is the starting point that makes reflective thought possible. Most people in history were aware that they were conscious when they are talking to others, hence the development of very explicit dialogic modes of thought. This "commitment to carry on the conversation", to organise his thinking around the concept of dialogue in order to "patch together a shared sense of humanity", is the guiding thread connecting different strands of Graeber's anthropology and political theory.

The dialogic approach brings together several strands of his thematic concerns into a single interconnected argument, at once complex in its scope and vision and original in the patterns and interconnections it draws upon and draws out. The larger political content of the argument has profound political implications and "unsettles almost everything", especially that peculiar Roman view of the human condition that insists on absolute individuals and abstract relations to an imagined totality, conjuring the image of detached souls clogging every pore and crevice of body politics.

In one of his finest books, *Possibilities* (2007), Graeber speaks of dialogical relativism, a procedure where

> one begins by observing, even though what traditional authorities have to say about nature of truth, beauty, or human nature might vary wildly from culture to culture, there is no place on earth where traditional authorities go entirely unchallenged, and the way people have of challenging them have a lot more in common than most of us would have ever expected. (2007, pp. 7-8)

To define complex concepts such as oppression, he argues, one has to define terms of conversation. Anthropology is, at its best, the beginning of a conversation, one in which comparisons are based on an 'assumptions such conversation is possible, even if it is difficult to know precisely why' (2007, p. 287). He states, even more explicitly, that 'questions of cultural difference only become relevant when there's already some sort of conversation going on. There is no reason to ask oneself how and whether one is to sit in judgement on another person's cultural universe unless you have some idea what that universe is; and that means that people are, to some degree at least, already communicating' (2007, p. 288). Having said this, he turns his attention to dialogical relativism as a 'mutual recognition of, and respect for, difference founded on the recognition of an even more fundamental similarity (hence, equality) that makes such recognition possible' (2007, pp. 289-290). Put differently, Graeber (2007) argues that the very fact that people are communicating postulates two things:

> First of all it presumes that there is some ground of similarity between them that makes communication possible … The second point is that the conversation has to take place within some larger social and political context, that this context is not simply a product of the conversation, but, rather, plays a substantial role in shaping what people feel they have to talk about. (p. 288)

In his much-quoted essay on communism, Graeber uses language to illustrate his argument for "baseline communism", as the conversation is always presumed to be cooperative, implying a sense of responsibility to your interlocutor. Many Marxists and liberals (including Marxists and liberal anthropologists) would recoil at such a suggestion, but here Graeber wants to fasten our attention on something other than ponderously theoretical abstract writings on this topic.

In his illuminating homage to Maurice Bloch, *Beyond the monastic self: Joint mind and the partial illusion of individuation* (n.d.), he is concerned with the subject of consciousness (etymologically, "knowing things together") and the development of patterns of intellectual life. From collective thinking and dialogic practice, we have slowly arrived at the monastic self, maintained by scholars and activists alike. Knowing things together, Graeber writes, is a consequence of doing things together. Some of these ideas are already present in his *Fragments of an anarchist anthropology* (2004). Anarchism is, Graeber suggests, a community of purpose and not of definition: it is defined by practice, which revolves, in turn, around the "dialogical principle". An anarchist community of argument eschews ideological uniformity and recognises the value of unconsummatability.

At the very heart of anarchist politics is an effort to figure out, collectively, how to reconcile inconsummerable perspectives in a practical situation of action. Dialogic politics makes it possible to start from a common commitment to action and not from a shared definition of reality, as is the case with Marxist political ontology. Much like feminism, in a dialogical and consensual process, the general is brought to serve the purpose of the particular, with people from radically different realities creating pragmatic unities over specific courses of action. As he writes in a more recent book, *Anarchy in a manner of speaking* (2020),

> anarchism is about the possibility of a crowd becoming smarter—not just than any randomly selected member of it—but of any individual member of it. It's about creating those modes of communication and deliberation which would allow that to happen. Hence the emphasis on practice. (pp. 140-141)

In politics, dialogue is a primary building block. It is a form of emergence of thoughts that are collective, which is what both anarchism and Anthropology are ultimately about.

We can appropriate the jazz idiom as a convenient metaphor to highlight the importance of dialogic politics. What we are referring to are more profound and substantial affinities between jazz and dialogic politics. Already in 1938 Thomas Mann delivered a lecture, later published as a short booklet meaningfully entitled *The coming victory of democracy* (1938), in which he argues that the aesthetics and practice of jazz embody the democratic idea. More recently, this line of thinking about jazz continued with Ralph Ellison (1964), Stanley Crouch (2006), and Walton M. Muyumba (2009), who argue that jazz is, simply put, democracy in a different, sonic form. When comparing jazz and dialogic politics, we can thus find that both build on process, play, innovation, listening and, above all, collective collaboration.

As jazz is improvised through a dialogue of individual self-expression and collective collaboration, dialogic politics is constituted only through our self-realisation resulting from cooperation. Recognising this dialogical quality of jazz, Martin Williams suggests that jazz cannot exist without *individual* interpretation of the melody, creation of sound, and articulation of emotion. However, paradoxically, it is precisely because of this that jazz demands collective cooperation, reaffirming the singularity of each individual and, concurrently, intrinsic equality of all:

> The high degree of individuality, together with the mutual respect and cooperation required in a jazz ensemble carry with them philosophical implications that are so exciting and far-reaching that one almost hesitates to contemplate them. It is as *if jazz* were saying to us that not only is far greater individuality possible to man than he has so far allowed himself but that such individuality, far from being a threat to a co-operative social structure, can actually enhance society. (Williams, 1993, p. 263)

Needless to say, political theory still has to catch up with this new terrain. From the hegemonic position, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus or Art Blakey may well truly sound like just noise, while Zapatista's *La Gira por la Vida* or the new politics of *Occupy* might merely appear like an inarticulate and opportunistic swagger.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos proposed a similar intellectual and political approach when he reintroduced and repolititicised "diatopical hermeneutics", as developed by late Raimon Panikkar. Diatopical hermeneutics can be briefly summarised as a *détournement*

of perspective that, instead of one (hegemonic) position from which we determine the relationship between equality and difference, proposes a plethora of such perspectives and "dialogical dialogue" between them.[1] Of course, Santos understands that there is a more profound link between intellectual and political projects. Put differently, the first step to cognitive justice would also be the first step to social justice. So, what is Santos' approach to the so-called "politics of difference"? Having in mind that the affirmation of equality and universalism does not necessarily mean emancipation, since it can also result in a loss of identity. Affirmation of differences and relativism can, conversely, result in another problem: in the justification of discrimination and subjugation.

The errors and limitations of universalism and relativism can, *prout* Santos, be solved with a diatopical hermeneutics or dialogue between *topoi* (*dia-topoi*). At this point, Santos (2008, p. 28) introduces the idea of "equal difference" based on two axioms that convert the relationship of equality *versus* difference to a genuinely new relationship of equality *and* difference. Santos' equal difference, in consequence, entails two key aspects that also inform Graeber's dialogic politics: first, it stresses difference when equality would threaten our identity and, second, it stresses equality whenever diversity would result in hierarchy and discrimination. The differences that would remain when inequalities and hierarchy vanish thus become a powerful denunciation of the differences that the status quo reclaims in order not to disappear.

Care and freedom

What material conditions would produce the kind of people one would like to have as friends? This is perhaps the central question that David Graeber was asking in his works. What is production, really, if not a way of producing people? And are not all economies ultimately human economies? Is it possible to replace categories of consumption and production with those of care and freedom? He agreed with John Holloway (2010) that we should always begin with wealth, but the production of wealth is but a part of a more extensive process of production of social relations. The concepts of the economy, itself a recent invention, and the concept of value have been restricted and emptied of meaning, which both World Bank economists and orthodox Marxists tend to forget. One of the most pernicious effects of this peculiar understanding of value is that

[1] Panikkar's thesis was that *topoi*—places of (self)understanding within a certain culture and tradition or, to put it differently, forms through which we think, although we do not think about them—cannot be fully understood with tools and categories of other *topoi*, but at least we can gain a better understanding of them by traversing between various *topoi*.

they define what is considered to work is and what is not.[2] However, what happens if we shift our lens and think about the production of people rather than on the production of things? What happens if we, when thinking about the creation of social value, shift the emphasis mutual production of people? What is society if not a mutual creation of human beings? The primary business of any society is taking care of each other.

Let us briefly consider Graeber's simple yet infinitely complex question: why not use the ideas of care and freedom as the paradigm for our new economy, which should only be a way to take care of each other?[3] In his book on *Bullshit jobs* (2018), he made a compelling argument regarding the unfortunate and paradigmatic influence of what might be called the "factory labour theory of value", a system that postulated the male factory worker as the principal economic protagonist. This masculine and productivist form of the labour theory of value, with the production of things rather than people as its conceptual pivot, was first embraced by the industrial bourgeoisie in the 18th century but has been almost universally accepted over the 19th century, together with the attendant Gospel of Work.[4] This is somewhat unusual, given that most workers never really worked in factories: working-class men and women were involved in hundreds of activities outside of the factory gates. At some point, the Gospel of Work was replaced by the Gospel of Wealth, and rich people (brilliant entrepreneurs from Andrew Carnegie to Bill Gates) became the real wealth creators. This paradox of modern work brought back a sadomasochistic synthesis of labor as punishment and self-discipline. Modern managerial feudalism rests on the notion of suffering as a badge of economic citizenship.[5]

In something of an ideological offensive, this new common sense of capitalism has naturalised the moralisation of work as a character-building exercise, ultimately producing unnecessary, or even mindless, bullshit jobs, which exist for the sole reason other than to keep people working. The caring classes and caring or socially beneficial work, such as nursing, or teaching, are those that are the least rewarded. What Graeber came to suggest, in a series of essays first published in the American journal *The Baffler*, is a complete

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[2] The best way to understand his research on the morality of debt and the moral power of work in books such as *Debt: The first five thousand years* (2011b) and *Bullshit jobs* (2018) is to think of them as political interventions.

[3] The realisation that care and freedom can be infinitely increased (without destroying the planet and oneself) is not negligible. The same cannot be said for production and consumption.

[4] His argument here is very interesting. He believed that the notion of production was, essentially theological, and derived from the Judeo-Christian God who created the universe out of nothing. Work is both suffering and creation, as well as self-mortification.

5 Graeber coined the term "managerial feudalism" for the endless multiplication of intermediate levels of administration, to the creation of new layers of managers in corporate middle management, education, and the creative industries whose main jobs often seem to naturalise the misery and suffering of actual producers working on jobs they recognise as essentially useless.

reversal of perspective. This would require a new labor theory of value that begins with social production and caring labor. Factory labour is a second-order form, and education, or nursing, is part of a much broader process of mutual aid and care that supports and ultimately creates the work by which we create each other. What we need to do, he went on to argue, is to change our categories of what labour is.

When Graeber argues that one of our main intellectual and political challenges is 'to get rid of the terms production and consumption as a basis for political economy' (2020, p. 57), he also calls for a redefinition or, even better, a reimagination of the working class not as producers but as carers. Graeber's understanding of care is, of course, not limited to social care and health care institutions, but by the "caring class", he understands society as a whole.[6] We should therefore start from a premise where society is seen as the process of the mutual creation of human beings. In his later works, including the delightfully ambitious *The dawn of everything* (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021), Graeber made significant and—we believe—still neglected connections between care and freedom. The aspect of caring is the maintenance of relationships. Caring theory, developed by many generations of feminists, successfully focused our attention on the fact that caring is not a value but the principal way for the creation of value. Graeber's signal contribution to this line of argument is his proposal to recognise care work as one that is directed at maintaining and developing its object's freedom.

This was formulated as a part of his fierce defense of the notion of freedom—he was, after all, an anarchist—attempting to rescue it from the patriarchal and liberal definition of freedom as individual autonomy. In doing so, Graeber rehabilitates the idea that freedom and equality are not in conflict, as in practice, it is not possible to have one without the other. It follows that liberal freedom is essentially unjust, as the market cannot be the basis for the freedom and equality of all. The second point in Graeber's understanding of freedom is confusing (read: subversive) when he equates it with play. Freedom is an action for its own sake, one that exists on every level of physical reality and the natural world. Freedom, thus defined, is indistinguishable from play, and facilitation of play is the ultimate aim of caring labour. This led him to reconceive value-creating labour as care carried out for the sake of enhancing freedom in all aspects of human existence.[7] To illustrate the relationship between care and freedom or the "caregiving relationship",

[6] When our priorities and activities are no longer be guided by the equilibrium of production and consumption (what is profitable), but by care and freedom (what is necessary).

[7] It is significant that Graeber viewed Occupy Wall Street, a movement of which he was one of the main protagonists, as "the revolt of caring classes".

Graeber often pointed out the relation between parent and child. Graeber concludes that parents take care of their children so that they can grow up and thrive but adds that

> obviously, in a more immediate sense, they take care of children so they can play. That's what children actually do most of the time. And play is the ultimate expression of freedom for its own sake. (2020, p. 58)

The core of caring relations is communistic responsibility to each other, in itself the foundation of all forms of social value. Influenced by Marcel Maus and Peter Kropotkin, he maintained that we already live in a communistic society and that capitalism is, at best, a bad way of organising communism. The most important revolutionary task is to put to rest the old two-step strategy of traditional Marxist movements: to take the power of the state and then create new (socialist) humanity. The new two-step strategy should first recognise that communistic relations are already here, everywhere around us, and then look for a mode of democratic coordination of existing forms of communism. The crucial question, then, is how to translate this into a new theoretical common sense, perhaps in a way that is similar to how the productivist labor theory was developed in the 19th century. It would most certainly have profound implications for how we consider every aspect of what we call "the economy". This would need to be predicated on a transformation of received categories so fundamental that it would constitute a revolution in itself.

Conclusion and overview

The aim of this article—and the entire volume—is to open debate on a larger, holistic view of Graeber's theories, interventions, analyses, or just ideas scattered across different (sub)disciplines, formats, and topics. Because our canvas is too small (read: word count and the number of articles that could be included), we followed Jackson Pollock's example, probably the most significant and influential exponents of Abstract Expressionism, pursuing our goal with a few broad strokes or spurts and splashes on the canvas. This allows us to perceive the complexity and coherence of Graeber's diverse contributions—ethnographic or theoretical, academic, or activist—and at the same time, sharpen our focus on a few details or ideas. Each contribution will discuss different aspects of his "dialogical anthropology" in diverse contexts, following varied goals and employing heterogeneous approaches.

However, we do hope that together, as a whole, the volume will enable us to recognise that Graeber's explorations of kings and clowns, state and non-state places, jobs and

leisure, hierarchy and freedom, debt and desire, police and puppets, obedience and rebellion, profit and mutual aid, property, and friendship, consumption and care, production and freedom offer a coherent, systematic, but unfortunately unfinished intellectual and political project. Our goal then is to return to his intellectual journey and reconsider ways to continue excavating new ideas and sharing them as "gifts", so they might open new ways to relate to each other—as scholars and citizens.

In *The ontological gambit: Ethnography, ontology, and politics in David Graeber and OTers' proposals*, Vicente Ordóñez explores one of the key yet still often overlooked tenets of Graeber's scholarship—his ontological position and how it shapes his academic (and political) orientation. After a brief encounter with Graeber and proponents of what has been called the "ontological turn" (notably Eduardo Viveiros de Castro), Ordóñez explores further Graeber's ontological background in critical realism. Ordóñez shows that Graeber's call for a realist ontology, combined with broad theoretical relativism has significant political consequences, since politics is about relations between people, and the introduction of ontological categories into the anthropological field is tantamount to imposing certain values, concepts, or schemes (by no means naïve) upon projects of human action. Ontological claims that support different cosmologies are, thus in essence, political and should also be explored as such when they serve to define what is real and what is unreal, what is possible and what is impossible, what is relevant and what is irrelevant. Ordóñez concludes that Graeber's "ontological gambit" would disclose not only emergent levels of reality as levels of increasing freedom but with that also the social and political solutions, initiatives, and concepts that have been suppressed or trivialised.

In *No one in the hotel wears a moustache, except the cooks: Gastronomy and systems of social reproduction*, Yann Cerf draws upon Graeber's understanding of violence, interpretive labour, schismogenesis, and, above all, ethnography in analysing hidden, undetected, or informal aspects of power in the food industry. Using ethnographic data drawn from an apprenticeship under a "master" in a French gastronomic kitchen, Cerf meticulously explores the division of labour in *haute cuisine* and reveals not only the bifurcation between its official and hidden transcripts but also a possibility of genuinely new research approaches and sensibilities to be employed in new, (under)explored settings. Cerf suggests that different positions and tasks of the "front of house" workers (waiters) and the "back of house" (the kitchen brigade) reinforce processes of differentiation, symbolic violence, class and gendered division of labour, and the tension between visible and invisible work. Moreover, his in-depth observations reveal how different roles and "different

interfaces" assigned to the "front" and the "back" also result in contrasting perceptions of customers, relations with them, and their wishes.

In *Plague jobs: US workers' schismogenetic approaches to social contracts*, Ilana Gershon explores how the COVID-19 pandemic re-configured how US workers understand the employment contract. The pandemic redefined the workplace as a space of pandemic regulation in the United States, where the federal government and many state governments refused to mandate appropriate pandemic protocols. Gershon employs interviews with people working in person during the pandemic as an ethnographic lens for understanding how workers perceive their work and risks involved when (implicit) social contracts are violated. Moving beyond her original chronotope, Gershon reflects on the experiences of those working in person during the early stages of the pandemic and ponders on the role of contractual sociality in structuring our political imagination and our understanding of how to govern and be governed in the workplace. Moreover, drawing on Graeber's theory of work, contract, and exchange, Gershon contests the simplified narratives of political identities and divides in the United States, since cleavages and attitudes identified in the pandemic context reveal entirely new political terrain, vectors, and dynamics, yet to be fully understood.

In *Dialogical encounter and the production of exilic space in Exarcheia*, J. R. Karlin turns to Graeber's theory of non-state spaces and his notion of dialogical anthropology while focusing on the predominant social and spatial relations of the autonomous neighbourhood in central Athens, Greece, often recognised as the socio-spatial epicentre of the Athenian anarchist and anti-authoritarian milieu. Karlin builds on the recent scholarly attention given to the notion of non-state spaces and explores the autonomous neighbourhood as the "exilic space" populated by communities that voluntarily or involuntarily attempt to escape from both state regulation and capitalist accumulation. In his study, he analyses and maps principles upon which a successful exilic space is founded and illustrate how they have manifested in Exarcheia, specifically, areas of social and economic life wherein people and groups in Exarcheia attempted to extricate themselves from capitalist economic processes, whether by territorial escape or by attempting to build structures that are independent of capitalist accumulation and social control. Karlin's ethnographic research conducted between 2016 and 2020 tackles several other topics explored by David Graeber, including militant research methodology, provisional autonomous zones, and dialogical encounters, and addresses a much larger question of how and why projects of autonomy can be jeopardised by internal tensions, often spurred by moments when dialogue breaks down or fails to manifest.

Caroline K. Kaltefleiter embraces the sensibility and breadth of Graeber's scholarship and activism in her contribution, *Care and crisis in David Graeber's New York: Anarcha-feminism, gift economies, and mutual aid beyond a global pandemic*. In her contribution, Kaltefleiter investigates the notion of care and resilience during crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic; she brilliantly combines her own experiences with anarchist collectives (the *Positive Force Collective* and *Riot Grrrl*) with research that incorporates historiography and auto-ethnography, along with semi-structured interviews of mutual aid activists. Reflecting and applying concepts of mutual aid and the gift economy to her analysis of the mutual-aid network during the COVID-19 pandemic, she offers a fresh and inspiring rereading of Graeber and his engagement with Marcel Mauss and Peter Kropotkin. Finally, Kaltefleiter offers us an inspiring analysis of the (post)pandemic political reality when she identifies ethics of care as the most prominent and lasting lesson of the COVID-19 pandemic. She shows how mutual aid networks (e.g., *Occupy*) endure even in the most challenging conditions and after apparent defeats but can be successfully revived in future crisis situations.

Moving from the problems of the capitalist regimes of labour to its alternatives, Srečo Dragoš's *Bullshit jobs and universal basic income* questions the sustainability and legitimacy of the hegemonic economic paradigm. He takes up the idea of the universal basic income (UBI) as a *panacea* for what Graeber calls "bullshit jobs". In elaborating on UBI as a viable strategy to liberate work from its market form, Dragoš discusses the main features of UBI and considers some of its main objections, including whether the proposed UBI is too utopian? Will UBI eradicate not only "junk" and "bullshit jobs" but also the labour market and the work ethic? Finally, would the introduction of UBI represent an excessive burden on public finances and is therefore economically infeasible? Using empirical data from Slovenia to support his argumentation, Dragoš walks us through all the dilemmas and twists and turns in discussions about UBI and its viability. He concludes, *prout* Graeber, that the real challenge here is not economic but rather moral and political.

Finally, in *Bureaucrats with guns: Or, how we can abolish the police if we just stop believing in them*, Andrew Johnson takes Graeber's essay *On the phenomenology of giant puppets: Broken windows, imaginary jars of urine, and the cosmological role of police and american culture* (2007c) as a starting point for his grand re-examination of hegemonic theories of police. Johnson explores Graeber's "groundbreaking, yet unappreciated" essay and his other works that contribute to theories of police in different ways and demonstrate that Graeber's research and activism were more perceptive of police than generally acknowl-

edged. Johnson's *tour de force* provides a genuinely insightful analysis of the abolitionist movement in the United States, which often poses an optical challenge for outside observers. Finally, it explores in further detail how Graeber's theory of the state offers a genuinely original and pathbreaking interpretation of police, suggesting that police as a form of structural violence derive power from their cosmological or imagined status. Johnson interweaves Graeber's theories of sovereignty, hierarchy, bureaucracy, and the (non-)state political entities to offer a critical reinterpretation of police and sheds new light on discussions on police abolition.

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Povzetek

Članek utemeljuje, da celostno branje opusa Davida Graeberja razkriva koherenten in sistematičen intelektualni in politični projekt. Kaže, da je potrebno njegove teorije, javne intervencije, analize ali zgolj ideje razpršene po različnih (pod)disciplinah, formatih in temah—od nedržavnih prostorov, anarhistične antropologije, demokracije, vzajemne pomoči, dolga, birokracije, drekastih služb, kraljev, do drugačnih interpretacij zgodovine in razvoja znanosti—razumeti kot premišljen in sistematičen poskus preoblikovanja in repozicioniranja vloge znanosti v iskanju radikalno drugačnega političnega in gospodarskega modela. V članku se osredotočamo na dialog kot središče Graeberjevega akademskega dela in politike. Za Graeberja je bil dialog vedno primarna antropološka metoda, ne le v smislu terenskega dela, ampak tudi v kontekstu kolektivnega ali dialoškega nastanka idej. Hkrati je dialog jedro njegove politike kot kolektivnega poskusa uskladitve nepremerljivih perspektiv v praktični situaciji delovanja. Na koncu raziskujemo Graeberjevo idejo o skrbi in svobodi kot novi politični in gospodarski paradigmi. Naslovimo Graeberjevo preprosto, a neskončno zapleteno vprašanje: zakaj ne bi namesto ideje proizvodnje in potrošnje kot osnovo za novo politično ekonomijo raje uporabili idejo skrbi in svobode, saj bi gospodarstvo navsezadnje moralo biti le način, kako skrbimo drug za drugega?

KLJUČNE BESEDE: David Graeber, antropologija, anarhizem, dialog, skrb, svoboda

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